

Mayor Rahm Emanuel
Remarks to the 2012 Democratic National Convention
As Prepared for Delivery

From President Obama's hometown of Chicago, it is my honor to speak to you about the President I served. I want to tell you what I saw up close while serving our president in a time of crisis - about the values he leans on and the voices he listens to.

When President Obama entered the White House, the economy was in free-fall. The auto industry: on its back. The banks: frozen up. More than three million Americans had already lost their jobs. And America's bravest, our men and women in uniform, were fighting the longest wars in our history.

You remember the uncertainty and fear that seized the country.

On that first day, I said, "Mr. President, which crisis do you want to tackle first?" He looked at me, with that look he usually reserved for his chief of staff -- "Rahm, we were sent here to tackle all of them, not choose between them."

There was no blueprint or "How-to" manual for fixing a global financial meltdown, an auto crisis, two wars, and a great recession, all in the first six months. Believe me, if it existed, I would have found it.

Each crisis was so deep and so dangerous, any one of them would have defined another Presidency.

We faced a once-in-a-generation moment in American history. Fortunately for all of us, we have a once-in-a-generation president.

And in those uncharted waters, I saw where the president finds his North Star. Every night, President Obama reads ten letters from every-day Americans. When I met with the President at the end of each day, he made sure he had their letters to read at his residence; letters from people just hoping for someone in power to understand their struggles.

I can't tell you how many times – whether we were discussing the economy, healthcare, or energy prices -- the president would walk to his desk, take out one of their letters and say, "this is who we're fighting for": parents working hard to save for their child's education; middle-class Americans fighting tooth-and-nail to hold onto their jobs, their homes and life-savings.

It is their voices that President Obama brings to the Oval Office; it is their values I saw him fight for every day.

And in the first month in office, he fought for the American Recovery Act: to cut taxes for the middle class, to put people to work building America's roads, rails and runways. And today, our economy has added more private sector jobs in the last three years than in the last seven years of the Bush administration. Banks are slowly but surely lending again – and never again will taxpayers foot the bill for Wall Street's excesses.

In case you forgot -- that was the change we believed in; that was the change we fought for; that was the change President Obama delivered.

President Obama took office knowing full well that for the last 80 years presidents had tried to reform our healthcare system. Today,

because of President Obama's courage, kids can stay on their parent's plan until they are 26. Insurers can't kick you off your policy because you've hit your limit; they can't deny you because you have a pre-existing condition. Because of the President's leadership, every American will have quality healthcare.

That was the change we believed in, that was the change we fought for, that was the change President Obama delivered.

I saw the President make the tough calls in the Situation Room –and today, our troops in Iraq have finally come home so America can do some nation building here at home.

That was the change that we believed in; that was the change we fought for; that was the change President Obama delivered.

I remember when the President received a report that the auto industry had a few weeks before collapse. We met in the Roosevelt Room late into the night. Some of the President's advisors said that in order to save General Motors, you had to let Chrysler go under. Others said it was throwing good money after bad. Among all the experts, there were only guesses and nobody put it at better than a one in four shot. Only the President suggested going all-in to save the industry.

Rising above all the voices in Washington, President Obama listened to the voices that mattered to him most – the voices of the auto workers and the communities that depended on them – just like the voices of the steelworkers and communities on the South Side of Chicago where he worked earlier in his career. To President Obama,

they weren't just companies that needed a loan; they were communities that needed a leader to stand up for them.

And because President Obama made the right choice, 1.2 million Americans are working today. The American auto industry is not just surviving; it is thriving.

When Mitt Romney was willing to turn his back on Dayton, Akron and Toledo, the President said, "I've got your back."

That was the change we believed in, that was the change we fought for, that was the change President Obama delivered.

And in those first few months, the President worked to put accountability into our children's schools with Race to the Top, so that every child has an education that measures up to their full potential. He was willing to demand change and embrace reform. The President never changed his views to suit the moment or the audience -- and that is also a measure of leadership.

Every challenge was different, every choice was difficult, but every time, the leadership was steady.

Now, one thing I know with absolute certainty, having served two great presidents, is that in the next four years, an unforeseen crisis, challenge or conflict is gonna' show up.

Whose leadership, whose judgment, whose values do you want in the White House when that crisis lands like a thud on the Oval Office desk?

A person who said in four words “Let Detroit go bankrupt,” or a President who had another four words: “Not on my watch.”

A person who wanted to keep “Don’t ask, Don’t tell,” or a President who believes that who you love should not keep you from serving the country you love.

A person who believes in giving tax cuts to the most fortunate -- or a President who believes in making college affordable for all Americans.

And believe me, when the fog of uncertainty that surrounds a crisis storms in to the White House, and all the advisors and chiefs of staff have only guess and hedges, it will be the president’s leadership that determines how we as a nation meet the challenges that face the middle-class; it will be the president’s judgment that shapes a future in which the middle-class has hope.

The person who takes the oath of office in the next four months will shape not just the next four years, but the next forty years of our nation. In these next four years we need proven leadership, proven judgment, and proven values. America needs four more years of President Barack Obama. Thank you.